

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

BRITTANY M ZEMO
Claimant

HYVEE INC
Employer

APPEAL 21A-UI-01840-ED-T
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 10/11/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the December 9, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that disallowed benefits based upon claimant's discharge from employment. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on February 24, 2021. The claimant, Brittany Zemo, participated personally. The employer, Hy-Vee Inc, participated through Hearing representative, Barbara Bass, and Natalie McGee. Claimant's A, B and C were received into the record.

ISSUES:

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?
Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed part-time as a warehouse worker. Claimant was employed from October 2, 2019 until October 7, 2020 when she was discharged from employment. Claimant's job duties involved driving forklift and moving product.

This employer has a written policy in place which prohibits sleeping on the job. A copy of the written policy was given to claimant upon her hire. Claimant knew that this written policy was in place.

The final incident occurred on October 7, 2020 when claimant fell asleep while at work and also drove a forklift in a sleepy/impaired condition causing approximately \$1,000.00 damage. Claimant's supervisor sent claimant home on October 7, 2020. Due to the severity of the issue involved when driving a forklift and falling asleep, claimant was discharged the next day. Claimant testified that she took the wrong medication on October 7, which affected her sleepy condition while she was at work.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged for job-related misconduct. Benefits are denied.

As a preliminary matter, I find that the Claimant did not quit. Claimant was discharged from employment.

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa Admin. Code r.871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

Further, the employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the

employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

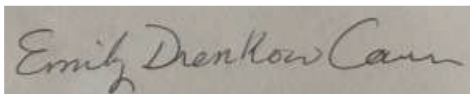
Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). The focus of the administrative code definition of misconduct is on deliberate, intentional or culpable acts by the employee. *Id.* Further, poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988). The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. *Lee v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000).

Continued refusal to follow reasonable instructions constitutes misconduct. *Gilliam v. Atlantic Bottling Co.*, 453 N.W.2d 230 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). In this case the claimant knew that it was against company policy to sleep on the job. Claimant's job duties required that she be alert and awake to provide security. Claimant ingested a medication that affected her ability to be alert and safely operate the forklift at work.

There is substantial evidence in the record to support the conclusion that claimant willfully and deliberately violated the employer's interests and rightful expectations that claimant would not sleep on the job in this case. Accordingly, the employer has proven claimant committed job-related misconduct.

DECISION:

The December 9, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld in regards to this employer until such time as claimant is deemed eligible.



Emily Drenkow Carr
Administrative Law Judge

March 4, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

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